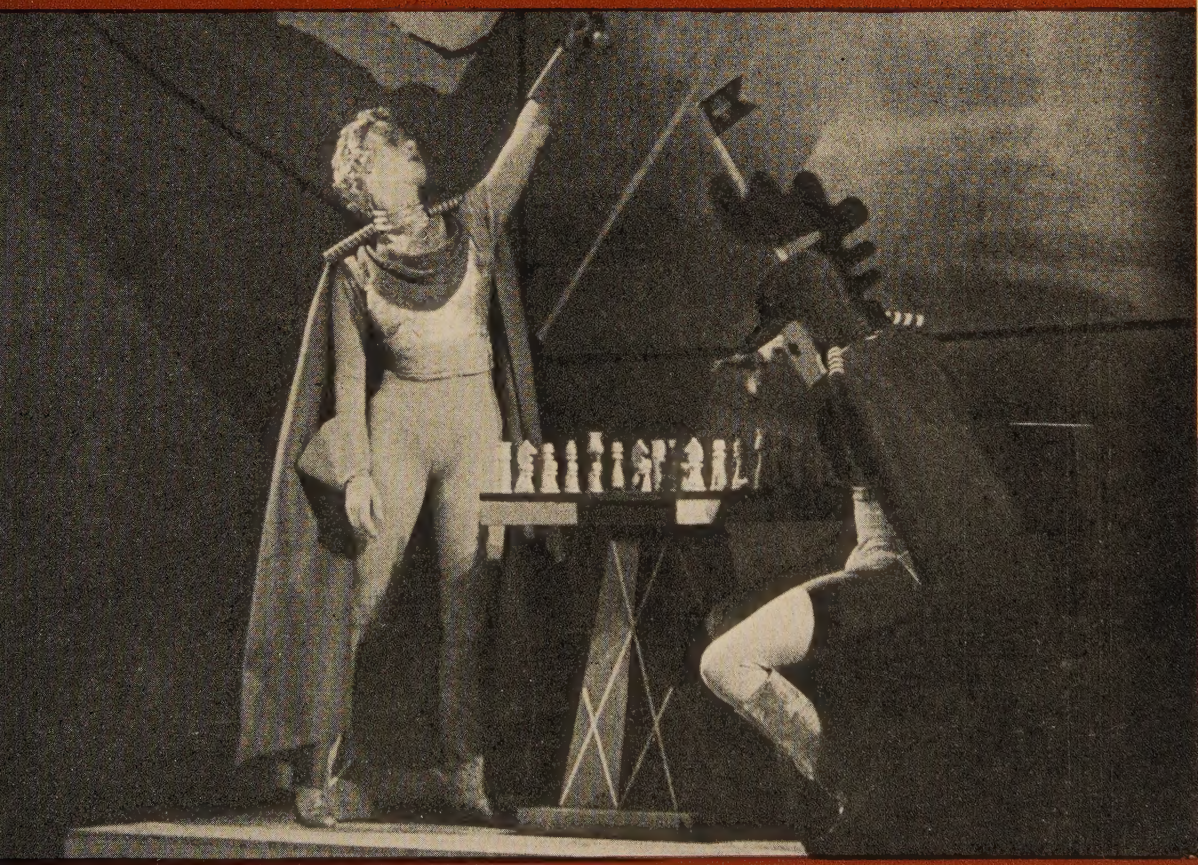
BALLET TODAY

VOL. I. No. 9 JANUARY, 1948



A MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO BALLET EVERYWHERE 2/-

Obtainable from your bookseller now

TWO DAYS OF THE DEVIL
by Wallace Nichols

One of the most beautifully written collections of historical stories since Maurice Hewlett's *Little Novels of Italy*. By the author of *Simon Magus*, *Old Apollo*, etc. **8/6** net

RETURN VIA RANGOON
by Philip Stibbe

"An absorbing account of heroism in the Burma campaign" —*Daily Mail*. "Movingly told"—*Times Lit. Supp.* With a foreword by Frank Owen. Illustrated. **9/6** net

---

Available shortly

ARABESQUES
by Alan Storey

The author has replied to Ninette de Valois' recent appeal for *adult* ballet criticism with a provocative and penetrating analysis of the backgrounds to ballet from the time of Lulli to Robert Helpmann. Illustrated. *about* **15/-** net

THE INTERVENERS
by Wallace Nichols

A new historical novel, set in France and Italy in the early 1830's, by the author of *Simon Magus*, etc. "A fine extravagance of imagination, and a monumental background of accurate detail"—*John O'London's*. *about* **9/6** net

NEWMAN WOLSEY

BALLET TODAY

Vol. I. No. 9 January, 1948

Editorial Offices - 244 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON W.C.1

Telephone: Chancery 8471

EDITORIAL COMMENT

A READER, whose kindness is beyond my powers of thanking, has sent me a photograph of Taglioni, which I reproduce on this page. It is inscribed on the back in Taglioni's own writing, "A ma gracieuse et charmante élève . . . , souvenir de Marie Taglioni, veuve Gilbert de Voisin, Paris, 1867". Taglioni was sixty-three at that time, but her features are still recognisably those of the famous early lithographs, one of which appears on page 9. In sending me this photograph, the giver writes: "My mother was sent from Quebec as a little girl to school in Paris. I had often seen this photograph, which was treasured always and which we, as children, thought extremely ugly. I do not think so now. My mother gave me the picture in 1933 and she wrote to me then: 'It is a very good likeness of her when I knew her. She came once a week in the evening to give us lessons in "deportment and dancing" and was a very pleasant, lively old lady. Sometimes she used to dance with the older girls and was very graceful and light on her feet. We considered it a great honour to be chosen to waltz with her. She had a little grandchild whom she adored and sometimes brought to look on at our antics, a girl about seven or eight, and the school girls made a great pet of her. We only saw Taglioni during our lesson hour but she was a great friend of the Miss Hutchinsons and was often with them at supper, etc. We understood that she had a sad private life and was poor and obliged to give lessons, but we really knew nothing definite about her.' " So is a little more added to the legend.

I wonder how many of the audience commented on a recent piece of peculiar programme arranging at Covent Garden, when at the end of each of the three ballets the curtain fell on a corpse (on two occasions on the same corpse). Programme building is only one of the many managerial headaches which go unremarked by the public, who do not have to give a thought to running time, lighting plots, types of ballet and casting, and can cover a sense of disappointment with the vague generalisation, "Not a very good programme", which quite often means, not that the ballets are poor but that they do not go well together. No company would put on *Les Sylphides* as a preliminary to *Giselle*, nor (we hope) present three purely *divertissement* ballets in one evening, but there are less obvious pitfalls. Even so, *The Rake's Progress*, *Miracle in the Gorbals*, and *Hamlet* all in a row should never have occurred, even on the plea that the programme was built around guest artist Robert Helpmann. Another unfortunate lapse was following the first performance of *Mam'zelle Angot* with *La Boutique Fantasque*, a ballet of a similar kind but with infinitely less zest in its English translation. If this was intended as a compliment to Monsieur André Derain, designer of both ballets, it can hardly have been appreciated by him, for he must have been appalled at what has happened to his colours and designs in the course of the years. It is only fair to the Sadler's Wells Ballet to say that the present décor was not re-created by them for this revival, but is the one used by Massine when the ballet was mounted by him in America, but it is a sorry travesty of the original.

Arletty, greatest of all French film stars, and Roland Petit of Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées, both paid a weekend visit to London in December, and on Saturday evening, December 6th, went to the performance at Covent Garden. Edward Mandinian has captured the event for posterity in a back-stage photograph which appears on page 29.

The resounding success of Alexander Grant in *Mam'zelle Angot* leads one to hope that he has put an end to the belief, for some reason commonly held in this country, that the only dancers worthy of serious consideration are classical dancers. This has led to some extraordinary pieces of miscasting in the Sadler's Wells Ballet, where every male dancer with any pretensions to technique is certain to find himself sooner or later grappling with one of the classical variations, no matter what his size, shape, temperament and general qualifications

(*Cont. on page* 26)

MARIE TAGLIONI IN 1867

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET AT COVENT GARDEN

By MARY CLARKE

CHECKMATE now seems to have settled into the Covent Garden repertory quite comfortably despite the widespread doubts, at the time of its revival, as to whether it had dated beyond hope of resurrection. It is by no means a perfect ballet, but good performance displays its virtues so markedly that it is invigorating despite its inadequacies and inconsistencies.

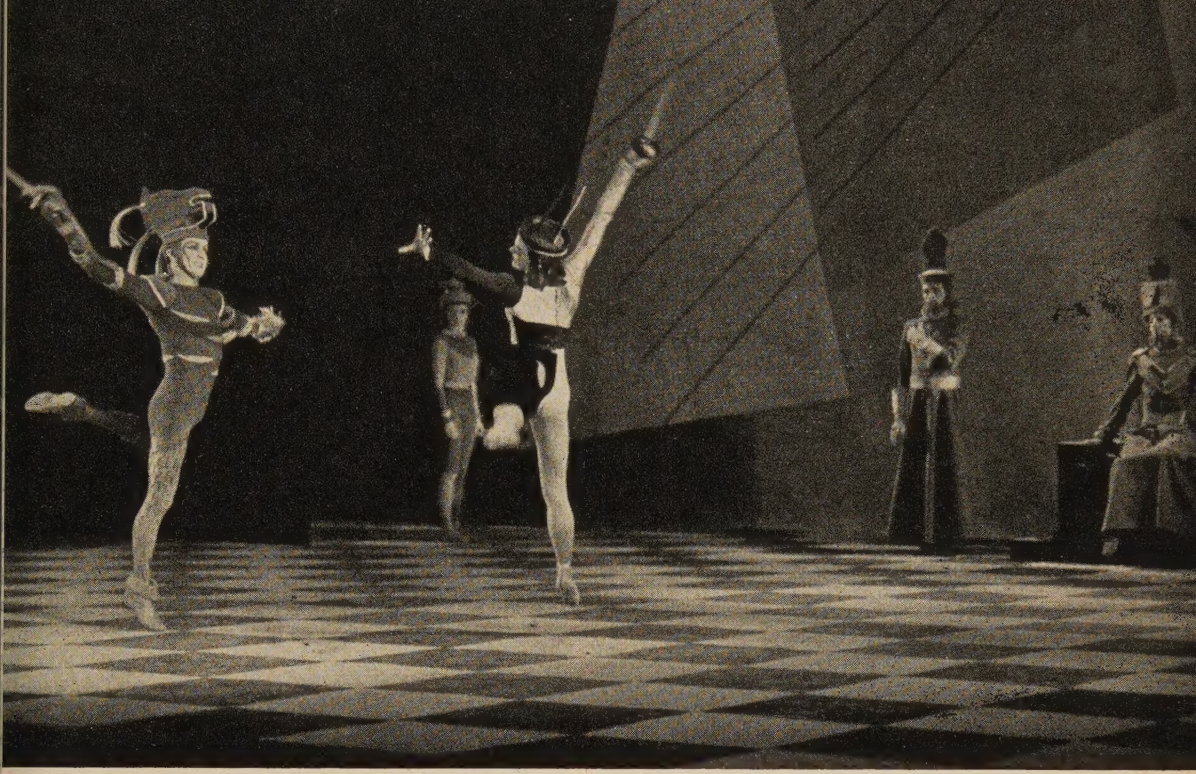
The most noticeable alteration in the production has been the attempt to stylise the performances so as to get the ballet across in a larger theatre. The motive was admirable, but in effect the practice seems to have gone rather too far and stylisation has been carried to the lengths of regimentation—which is by no means the same thing. As Ninette de Valois herself has said: "Individuality in the artist must not be suppressed, it must merely be disciplined". It could be claimed, of course, that the characters of *Checkmate* are indeed puppets, dominated by the superhuman forces of Love and Death, but it is impossible to claim sympathy for cardboard figures unless they are to be allowed human emotions which will break them upon the will of the gods. Still, the ballet does get across: indeed it is more effective from a distance than from the lower circles.

But for a choreographer of Ninette de Valois's intellectual power *Checkmate* is curiously confused in both conception and design. If the core of the tragedy is the struggle between Love and Death, mirrored in a game of chess, and if no genuine game of chess is to be worked out, then surely the choreographer should have concentrated upon the conflict between the Red Knight, the champion of Love, and the Black Queen, who plays for Death, and brought the ballet to a swift conclusion after the Red Knight has been killed? The complete triumph of Death is manifest in the actual destruction of the Red King rather than in the lengthy manoeuvres that lead up to it. Again, just how important are the Red King and his weak yet sympathetic consort? In the original production of *Checkmate* they are generally agreed to have almost stolen the ballet; in the present version they are utterly insignificant. Possibly this was the effect that the choreographer intended from the beginning and possibly the original exponents of the roles developed them in a manner that she had not primarily envisaged, but if they are of no importance to the plot why should so much time be devoted to the killing of the Red King? The logical answer is that either he should be established clearly on his first doddering entrance and allowed to remain a dramatically strong (though physically weak) figure throughout the ballet, or else his death should be as despatchful as his entrance is impotent.

The great merit of the choreography is that it is genuine choreography—a dramatic motivation of *dancers*—but the pity is that although the dancers do really dance all the time the movements created for them are not in themselves very interesting. The opening dance of the Red Pawns is attractive, if a little jaunty for the opening of a tragic ballet, and there is nobility in the passage where the four knights try their opposing strengths. The twisted lifts and hard staccato walk of the Black Queen admirably suggest her power, but the solo for the Red Knight is puerile, running downhill from the beginning instead of mounting to a climax, and the solo for the Black Queen, when she taunts the Red King but disdains to kill him, seems quite redundant. Yet, despite the deficiencies of many contributory passages, *Checkmate* does make a powerful effect in the theatre. Like many other ballets from the same hand it has a superb ending (de Valois consistently creates better *ensembles* than *soli*) and there is nothing

PAMELA MAY AND HAROLD TURNER IN "LA BOUTIQUE FANTASQU

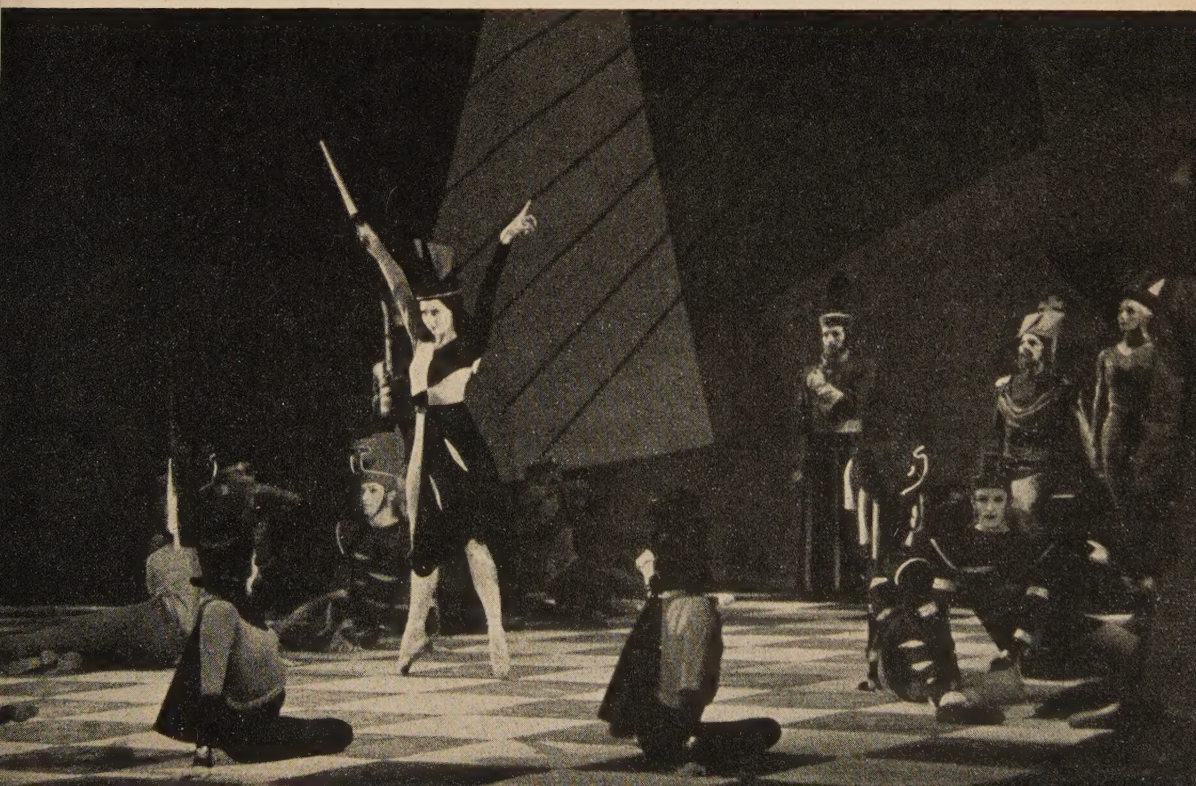
Action photograph by Edward Mandinian



HAROLD TURNER AS THE RED KNIGHT AND PAMELA MAY AS THE BLACK QUEEN IN "CHECKMATE"

Action photographs by John Sharman

BERYL GREY AS THE BLACK QUEEN, WITH MICHAEL SOMES AND JOHN FIELD AS THE RED KNIGHTS



like a good ending for convincing an audience that it has seen a good ballet. In this case, the relentless hunting down of the tiny defenceless figure of the Red King by the massed forces of the Black Queen has great theatrical effectiveness, and the military precision of the dancing is given almost unbearable force by the strong rhythms of Bliss's fine score.

McKnight Kauffer's designs are aggressively posterish, but I prefer their clean lines to much of the wishy-washy décor that has entangled some recent productions. Some of the new costumes are less happy than the originals and there should be a law against designers revealing female thighs in tights which have a shiny finish. (There are occasions when I feel that M. Maillot has quite a lot to answer for.)

Performances, within the limits of the choreographer's intentions, have been good. The regimental quality imposed upon characterisation tends to reduce individual performances to adequacy, but English dancers respond well to this type of drilling. The Black Queen and the Red Knight still emerge as tangible characters: as the Black Queen, Pamela May combines implacable cruelty with the confident power of a beautiful woman, while Beryl Grey attempts a softer, more serpentine, duplicity. Harold Turner dances the Red Knight well and in a carefree manner which renders him easy prey to the Black Queen. Michael Somes, in the same role, brings a musical sensitivity that simplifies the awkward duel, and almost lends distinction to the Red Knight's solo. In the small supporting role of the second Red Knight, John Field, too, dances consistently well. Neither of the alternative casts for the Red King and Queen could make much impression upon the slimmed and stultified roles, and one was forced to the conclusion that the Red King is a part for which the services of Robert Helpmann are still indispensable.

Looking back over the first six weeks of the season there was, in fact, much to enjoy, although (as with most ballet companies this side of paradise) much to regret. The opening night *Giselle* was a routine affair, and the production is unworthy of the leading dancers' abilities. I thought Fonteyn's dancing in her first act solo and second act adagio exceptionally lovely, but I am more conscious of her Giselle's dancing than of her tragedy. Michael Somes is a very good Albrecht and Leslie Edwards the best Hilarion I have seen. Despite a spotlight which must totally blind her, Beryl Grey's excellent dancing as Myrtha almost compensates for the fact that she is dramatically miscast; her personality on the stage is essentially friendly yet she seems to dance a succession of bad women.

Robert Helpmann returned as Guest Artist to several of his old parts and endowed them with his incomparable authority. The revised revival of *Adam Zero* seems unimproved, unintelligible and unpleasant, but what a brilliant actor Helpmann is! Other exciting performances were Margot Fonteyn's first *Swan Lake* of the season, and Violetta Elvin's miraculously touching Young Girl in *The Rake's Progress*. Helpmann was succeeded in *Hamlet* by Michael Somes whose youthful prince, bewildered and pained by the corruption around him, is a gentler, more sympathetic character—but I am doubtful whether, even in a sleep of death, he would have had such a singularly nasty dream.

A CHEER FOR MAM'ZELLE ANGOT

IT would be a poor heart that refused to rejoice over the arrival at Covent Garden of *Mam'zelle Angot* (first night, November 26th, 1947). This is so important a ballet for Sadler's Wells that it does not signify at this juncture that it is not a "major Massine", though this fact seems to have disturbed some people. The essential point is that this Company have at last found a piece of bubbling fun to which they can bring the zest and high spirits which they have so often been accused of lacking. Ever since Sadler's Wells Ballet moved to the Royal Opera House the repertoire (a dangerously small one for a company which is in residence at one theatre for seven or eight months in the year) has leaned very much towards the gloomy side.

Mam'zelle Angot will take the place that *La Boutique Fantasque* was probably expected to fill and so lamentably does not, though it will hardly last the nearly-thirty years of that Diaghilev favourite. It should, however, be assured of a long and honourable life *provided it continues to be danced as it is at present*. That is an essential proviso, for as a piece of construction it is by no means flawless, it carries no message, sets no problem, never exercises the audience's brains for a moment, and therefore depends sheerly on its performance for the pleasure it gives. But what a pleasure that is!

I can make as imposing a list of faults as the next person; for example, it is rather too long—two or three minutes might come out of each of the first two

(*Continued on page 30*)

MARGOT FONTEYN AND ALEXANDER GRANT

MARGOT FONTEYN AND MICHAEL SOMES

raphs by Edward Mandinian

"MAM'ZELLE ANGOT"

MARGOT FONTEYN, JOHN HART, MOIRA SHEARER AND MICHAEL SOMES

"MADEMOISELLE CAMARGO DANCES", THE FAMOUS PAINTING BY LANCRET

THE BALLET DRESS

By PHILIP BAKER

DURING the three centuries of ballet the whole history of the dress has been one of gradual progress from the heavy draperies which once prevented the dancer from leaving the floor to the comfortable, practical costume of the present day. It is closely bound also to the development of dance technique, for the various alterations which the dress has undergone have either been born out of, or directly affected, the movements of the dancers.

In the early days of the ballet a "dress" such as we know did not exist. The ladies of the nobility who danced in the ballets performed for Louis XIV, for instance, wore ordinary court attire, consisting of a tight-fitting bodice, long hooped skirts sweeping the ground, a high powdered wig, and a mask. A costume which would handicap a dancer more can scarcely be imagined, and accordingly there was no attempt at complexity of step, the choreography consisting of a series of geometrical patterns danced to the music of the minuet or pavane.

With the growing popularity of the ballet outside Court circles, and the emergence of the professional ballerina, however, it began to be realised that greater liberty of movement must be allowed if the dance was to develop. The first step in this direction was taken in 1725 by Marie Camargo, the first of the great professional ballerinas. La Camargo wished to free her feet from the enveloping skirts, and accordingly she defied convention and gave orders that her dresses were to be shortened several inches, enough to expose her feet and ankles. The actual dress is shown in Lancret's famous portrait of the dancer.

A few years later Camargo pioneered another innovation. The additional liberty given by the shorter dress had encouraged her to invent several new movements, one of which—the *entrechat quatre*—consisted of a vertical leap, with the feet changing position in mid-air. She found it extremely difficult to execute this new movement with the existing high-heeled slippers, however, and she therefore had a

ir of heelless slippers with ribbon ties made—the iginal of those in use today.

Another great ballerina of the early eighteenth ntury was La Camargo's greatest rival, Marie Sallé. ıe also chafed under the restrictions which the over-aborate dresses placed upon her, but she had more ositive ideas on the correct attire for a dancer than ıd Camargo. Serious differences of opinion on this uestion with the directors of the Paris Opera caused er to abandon that city for London, where she roceeded to put her ideas into practice.

Early in 1734 she began rehearsing her own produc-on of *Pygmalion*, and later that same year she caused sensation in London by appearing in it as Galatea, earing a loose Greek tunic, her hair loose, and minus ig and mask.

Soon after the shortened skirt à la Camargo had een generally adopted it was ruled that no dancer ıould appear on the stage without a tight-fitting allet knicker. The introduction of this new regu-tion was the result of an embarrassing incident during performance, when the skirt of one of the dancers ecame hooked up on a projecting piece of scenery. Vithout underwear, and in full view of a large audience, ıe unfortunate girl was forced to remain in this im-ıodest posture for several minutes before being freed.

MARIE TAGLIONI, A REPRODUCTION OF THE CHALON PRINT

IATHILDE KCHESINSKA IN "ESMERALDA", PETERSBURG PERIOD, ABOUT 1890

In the years following the great upheaval of the French Revolution the classical costume pioneered by Marie Sallé again came into fashion. The light gauzy material of which this dress was made created some-thing of a problem at first, for the whole length of the dancer's bare leg could be seen through it, a thing considered improper in those days.

Some means had to be found, therefore, of satisfying propriety, and at the same time keeping the beauty of the costume. M. Maillot, costumier at the Paris Opera, finally solved this problem when he conceived the idea of flesh-coloured tights, which gave the illusion of nudity but gave the wearer complete freedom.

The advent of tights gave rise to still further modi-fications of the ballet dress, and in 1832 the ancestor of our modern costume appeared. Marie Taglioni, the reigning Italian ballerina, wore it for the first time when she appeared in the title role of *La Sylphide* at the Paris Opera. It consisted of a tight-fitting bodice, cut to a point at the front, and a filmy white muslin dress with a bell-shaped skirt falling just below the knee. Strangely enough, it was the colour of the dress, not the dress itself, that caused the sensation, for white had never been worn in the ballet before. It was swiftly copied in other countries, however, and,

except for slight alterations in length and material, the style has remained in vogue for over a century.

The existence of the dress was seriously threatened a few years later by the appalling number of accidents which it caused. In those days, before the discovery of electricity, the stage was lighted by oil lamps behind wire guards. Fanned by the slightest breeze the flame could very easily ignite the inflammable material of the dresses, and on one occasion at Drury Lane, in 1844, Clare Webster, a promising young ballerina, was burned to death before the eyes of the audience.

This urgent problem remained unsolved, however, until 1859, when M. Carteron, a French chemist, invented a substance which would enable costumes and scenery to be rendered fireproof. Even today, despite the introduction of electric lighting, fireproofing of costumes and scenery is still compulsory in all theatres.

During the early years of the twentieth century Isadora Duncan, coming from America, caused a sensation by attempting to revive the classical costume. Her views on ballet were, to say the least, unorthodox, for she condemned as unnatural corsets, tights, skirts and padded shoes, advocating instead a return to Greek tunic, flowing hair and bare feet, and to slow Greek rhythm danced to the music of the classics. Isadora carried on her campaign outside as well as inside the theatre, often appearing in public in Greek robes, with legs and feet bare.

ISADORA DUNCAN, 1908

MARY ELLEN MOYLAN OF BALLET RUSSE DE MONTE CARL
IN A MODERN TUTU

ANNA PAVLOVA, PETERSBURG PERIOD, ABOUT 1908

Naturally, she was regarded by most as a crank, and neither she nor her theories were taken seriously until her visit to Russia in 1907. Here, in spite of some abuse, her ideas found great favour with the Russian intelligentsia, and resulted in the appearance of Fokine's *Eunice* in 1908, when the Greek tunic was worn for the first time in Russia.

The ballet dress as we know it today is not to be regarded merely as a beautiful embellishment for its wearer, but as active assistance in the interpretation of an idea. The modern ballet costume, combining as it does comfort with practicality, is likely to remain in service for many years to come.

EVENING WITH THE GODS

WHEN Ram Gopal dances a magic happens which dissolves the walls of the theatre to leave us open to the warm, jasmine-scented night skies of India. Here time loses its meaning and we are contemporary with the antique gods who move among us, unconcerned, but always with a certain aloofness which springs from consciousness of their God-head. We regain our lost Paradise until the final curtain, when we are back once more in an ugly, dirty theatre, and must face the bitter darkness of a London post-war winter.

For me, Ram Gopal's dancing held a special quality and roused in me the acutest nostalgia for a country which, beautiful and tragic at one and the same time, leaves no one unmoved who has ever visited it. I remembered performances of dancing when, at the end, there was no break, no return to cold and dark; but the dancer and the background were part of the same tragically magnificent whole.

So, for me, Ram Gopal's dancing has about it no momentary fascination of the strange and exotic; I recognise what it is that gives it the strength and flexibility of tempered steel. For the dancing we watch here in London in 1947 is based on codified techniques which were many hundreds of years old before anyone in the West had even remotely begun to think of dancing as a serious means of artistic expression. But this technique is not something dead. It has its roots deep in the hearts and minds of men and it lives and suffers and is happy with them. So living an art-form is it, that I have seen it as well applied to expressing current political problems (grain rationing; Hindu-Muslim unity), as to the stories of gods and fabled hunters. And, indeed, if there were not something fundamental to all human creatures of whatever race in the various styles of Indian dancing, how should we poor Westerners, with our little two thousand years' history, be able even to catch a glimpse of the meaning behind this ancient, complex language of gesture which uses a vocabulary completely foreign to our own?

At one point in the programme, Ram Gopal, scientist, isolates and holds up for our inspection frozen specimens of some of the hand gestures (mudras) of the Kathakali style. This isolation is not only fascinating in itself—it gives us the warm feeling of "being in the know"; it provides us with the thrill of detection in the subsequent items (ah! there, now! that's a peopled town, this a creeper, that—lumbering—solid—an elephant!) and it makes us appreciate the liquidity with which, in the dances, the mudras flow into one another so that Kathakali is a living example of the Hindu doctrine of Change and Becoming.

Yet this is remote from the vocabulary of our own dance language.

Even more remote is the classic, Euclidean beauty of Bharat Natya. This style, directly transmitted to mortals by Siva Nataraj shows the gods in their less accessible moods. They are still among us, true, but no longer of us.

And, strangely, we remember the evening as a blaze of colour though the stage is bare but for the flashing dresses of the dancers and, now and again, a gay curtain hanging at the back. So it may be that our Western imaginations, though woefully weak from lack of exercise, still can function, and enjoy functioning, when the opportunity demands.

The music, too, is not of our world—yet, though strangely remote, it is strangely familiar (even on those rather regrettable occasions when gramophone records were used); we respond to it as naturally as if we had known it all our lives, so persuasive is the power of Ram Gopal's magic.

And as we strain our eyes and ears so as to miss nothing, we are bound to realise that this dancing answers some craving, some need in us, which is answered nowhere else.

And I think, as I watch Ram Gopal dancing, that this need is our need for our lost unity with the gods, our longing for Paradise.

FRANK JACKSON.

RAM GOPAL IN "RAJPUT SERENADE OF LOVE" A BALLET IN THE KATHAK STYLE

RAM GOPAL AND SHEVANTI IN A KATHAKALI DANC "THILLANA"

RAM GOPAL WITH SHEVANTI AT THE PRINCE'S THEATRE, LONDON

Action photographs by Edward Mandinian

RAM GOPAL AND SHEVANTI IN "RAJPUT SERENADE OF LOVE"

SHEVANTI IN "RAJPUT SERENADE OF LOVE"

A TYPICAL ROMANTIC BALLET GROUPING, FROM A GERMAN PRINT DATED 1840

ON BALLET CONSIDERED AS ONE OF THE MINOR ARTS

By ALAN STOREY

PART I

A TIME comes when the ensign is lowered and for a brief, brave season the Jolly Roger streams from the critic's mainhead. This piratical abandon, the jettisoning of all articles of faith, is the reaction to a sudden and desperate conviction on the critic's part that he is wasting both his time and that of his readers in pursuit of an illusion. ". . . it is not easy", as Miss Lejeune pointed out on the occasion of her own mutiny, "for a critic to give up the pretence that the thing he is criticising is an art. . . . It is a pleasant pretence that the subject of our weekly discourse is something requiring a little culture and erudition in the writer. . . ." In some ways it is still more difficult for the ballet critic who, in recent years, has evolved a special jargon to bolster up a summary conviction that ballet is a representative—if not *the* representative—art of his generation.

I must confess to my own lack of faith. The past year, with its minor pleasures and major disappointments, has done nothing to answer the questions I have withheld so expectantly. What, for instance, has ballet achieved in the three hundred years of its existence? Where does its future lie? What is its precise value as an art-form, or as a contribution to the culture of our time? For, in spite of the rare exceptions that have burst forth like the results of some haphazard chemical experiment, the relationship of ballet to its sister arts and to general aesthetic experience remains fundamentally unchanged from that of Noverre's day. In other words, ballet, unlike the opera and music-drama, still suffers from the peculiar nature of their common origins.

It is only within the last forty years or so that ballet has come to be taken seriously by those outside the immediate circle of its interpreters and enthusiasts. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries indeed it appears to have been generally accepted as little more than entertainment and rather less than art. Noverre's secondary concern in publishing his *Letters* appears to be an attempt to remove the basis of this indifference and establish choreography as an art equal to poetry, drama, sculpture and painting. The fact that he considered it necessary reveals the doubts which existed in his own mind. Ballet, he insisted, must be expressive, taking Nature as the source of its inspiration. A revolutionary idea that might conceivably have altered the whole course of balletic development but, unfortunately, went no further. M. Svetloff has pointed out that contemporary opinion was divided over the question of Noverre's creative genius; the suggestion being that, unlike Gluck—with whom he agreed on the principles and presentation of music and dance-drama—he failed to realise his theoretical ideas in an imaginative medium. Certainly his inability to resolve the innate problems of dance-drama forced him to sidetrack the dance and compromise with pantomime. Unfortunately, in his earnest endeavour to achieve equality, Noverre merely succeeded in subordinating ballet to the laws of alien aesthetics. If sculpture reveals the human body in its perfections, he maintained, then ballet must use sculpture as its model. If painting presents us with perfection of design and composition, then ballet must conform to its laws—and so on. This humiliating

dependence on art and literature has persisted, upheld in each subsequent manifesto from Blasis's *Code* to Fokine's *Principles*.

But if Noverre's approach to Nature, i.e. visual reality, was indirect and incomplete, his intention was, to say the least, audacious. To suggest that ballet could and should be an expressive art "capable of expressing the movements of the heart and the affections of the soul" was a far cry from the debilitated condition of the dance and thematic material of the *opera-musicale* and the *menus plaisirs* of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In spite of Ménestrier's apologetics, the elaborate charades staged with such costly magnificence at Fontainebleau and in Venice, with their cynical use of allegory and myth, betray little trace of creative imagination. How could they, denied the vitalising contact with the outside world essential to a healthy art? Nevertheless, ballet's preoccupation with conventional themes, formless spectacle and, above all, technical virtuosity, continued throughout the Romantic era.

In some respects ballet held an enviably comfortable position during the nineteenth century. A *demi-mondaine* position, at once the charming mistress of the opera and the darling of the major arts; and, like all such positions, curiously sensitive to the finer shades of accepted behaviour. To appreciate this delicate *ménage* fully one must turn to the writers of the period; to Gautier principally, to Janin, or even to our own Thackeray. Their observations have one thing in common which distinguishes them from their authors' reviews of painting, drama, etc.—an almost imperceptible coyness. It was an adoring but deprecatory attitude such as one finds in Victorian references to "the Sex". No one can doubt Gautier's genuine devotion to the ballet. Moreover, it was a devotion refined by that critical sensitivity which marks Marcel's love for Albertine in *La Prisonnière*. But, as I have pointed out elsewhere, Gautier's appreciation was the result of egocentricity rather than detached observation. His descriptions are of a world created by himself and peopled by the images of his poetical fantasy; a world of inspiration and refuge. Beyond lay the other world of reality; the world of *Le Capitaine Fracasse*, of *Émaux et Camées*, of art and the conflicting ideologies described by the Goncourts. It is in this dualism as an inhabitant of two worlds that Gautier unwittingly reveals the disparity between ballet and the major arts.

Not only did ballet fail to make any valuable contribution to Romanticism, it remained indifferent to the concepts and ideals which inspired that movement, choosing to exploit only those superficial aspects which escaped controversy to colour popular "taste". Predominant among these was the misconception of the Goethean *Ewig Weibliche* as a prettified "Ballerina Myth"—the unattainable *bien-aimée*—which recurs in ballet after ballet. The male element was weakened to the point of disappearance by the new idealisation, in itself a symptom of the exalted but impotent position of women in *bourgeoisie* Society. True, as Gautier proclaims: "l'Opéra fut livré aux gnomes, aux ondines, aux salamandres, aux elfes . . . et à tout ce peuple étrange et mystérieux qui se prête si merveilleusement aux fantaisies de maître de ballet"; but one wonders if fairyland had anything more to offer ballet than the former emasculated Olympus.

This situation would be excusable to some extent if the argument were solely concerned with the reproduction of subject matter; although no less an authority than H. C. Collis suggests that the "brilliance of ballet as an art-form is most in danger when dissipated on trivial themes perversely handled". On the other hand, representation is irrelevant unless it contributes to aesthetic effect, and no one, unless attacked by nostalgic longings for a non-existent past, can possibly claim that the early Romantic ballet brought about a revolutionary change in choreographic design, or even advanced its development from the primitive structure of the *opera-musicale*. Design in ballet—by which I refer to the formal relationship of individual linear patterns to a master figuration—did not keep pace with the increasing technical ingenuity of virtuoso dancing. The zeal shown by choreographers in the invention of new, exciting and often exquisitely moving *enchaînements* for such simple forms as the *pas de deux* and *pas de quatre* did not extend to the *corps de ballet*; with the result that choral movements were relegated to a decorative and inorganic background. The orchestration of such movements was almost unknown, the nearest approach being the perfunctory division of two or more groups into symmetrical poses. *Giselle*, undoubtedly one of the exceptions referred to earlier in this essay and the only ballet of the French Romantic school to survive, has provided the subject matter for two penetrating analyses by such eminent choreologists as Mr. Beaumont and M. Lifar. Yet even the latter's defence cannot persuade me that the choral movements of *Giselle* are not the weakest part of its choreography. It is by no means an exaggeration to suggest that, in comparison to *Giselle*, and more especially to the existing examples of Russian academic ballet, the group dances in *Oklahoma!* and *Finian's Rainbow* are richer, more aesthetically stimulating and far more imaginative.

The reasons for these shortcomings and their effect on ballet today are matters for speculation. I can only suggest that the *dilettante* regarded ballet as a relaxation offering splendid opportunities for toying delicately with current intellectual fashions—a

(*Continued at foot of next page, col.* 1)

FILM BALLET—A NEW ART FORM?

Story and photographs by MAURICE AMBLER

A BRITISH film is again breaking new ground. It is a full-length technicolour film about ballet.

It is not a film with a stage ballet included only because ballet happens to have a large following. If you want to see stage ballet you must still go to the theatre. But this is not stage ballet at all—it is ballet written for or translated for filming. And that is a very different pair of shoes altogether—in fact *The Red Shoes*.

Ballet lovers say that films about ballet in the past have not been recognisable as the ballets they have learned by heart. From the point of view of a theatre audience this is understandable; for, whereas the audience does not move, the camera has moved and rightly so. From close-up of face to close-up of feet and from one dancer to another the camera has selected and simplified where no such selection or simplification was ever required by the choreographer. It must therefore be admitted that the result to the initiated has been a disappointment.

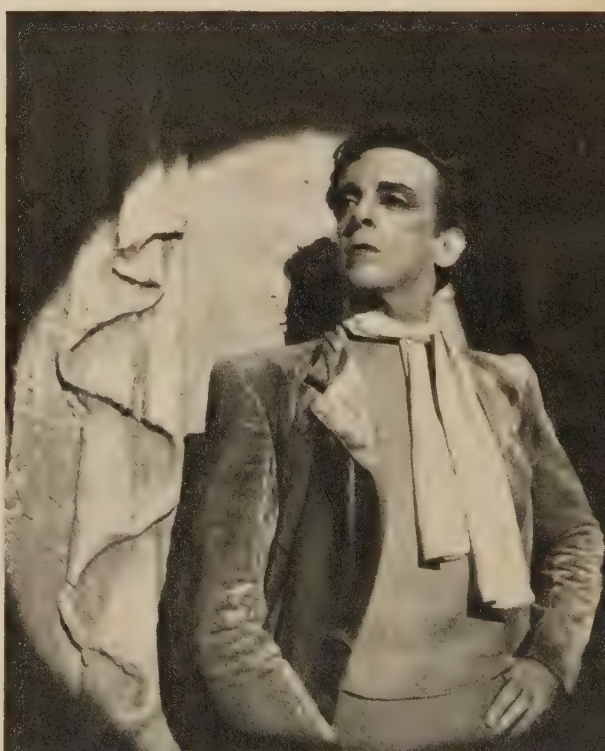
Now for the first time in the film *The Red Shoes*, ballet has been planned as though through the camera lens, and it could not be produced in any other way than by film. *Now* the great gift of mobility that the film has is utilised to beautiful effect in emphasising and punctuating in its own way the rhythm of a new and exciting medium.

The team which is making this unique and extremely difficult film is a brilliant one. First, the great Leonide Massine, probably the most famous male dancer in the world and one of the outstanding figures in the whole history of ballet. In the film are several ballets in which he dances; one of them is his own ballet *La Boutique Fantasque* which he has translated for this film.

Emeric Pressburger is the producer and wrote the story which was inspired by a fairy story by Hans Andersen. Simply, it is the story of a girl who had to dance; thus it contains ballet and also the thoughts that fill her mind. It tells something of the inspiration, the worry and the work that lies behind ballet.

The director is Michael Powell who calls this film the most unusual of all the unusual films he has done. Together producer and director have achieved some noteworthy films—*49th Parallel*, *I Know Where I'm Going*, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *A Matter of Life and Death*, *Black Narcissus*.

ROBERT HELPMANN, CHOREOGRAPHER, ACTOR AND DANCER IN "THE RED SHOES"



(*Continued from previous page*)

viewpoint which infected the latter days of the *Ballets russe*. And secondly, that the choreographers of the Romantic period, competent as dance arrangers, had little or no interest in the ballet as a potential art-form; being, in effect, the servants of scenarist and composers, interested only in exploiting the technical virtues of their *ballerine*.

Seen in perspective against the achievements of Romanticism in other spheres, against the Wagnerian canon, Verdi's *Falstaff* and *Otello*, Brahms's symphonies, etc., *Giselle* takes on a new significance as the representative of what Mr. Newman styles "the cult of the artificial, which moves and has its useless and decorative being within the orbit of the static and the decadent". It would be better perhaps if we forgot that ballet has a past and concerned ourselves with the problems which prevent it, even now, from fulfilling itself as a major form of art . . .

(*To be concluded in our March issue*)

HEIN HECKROTH, DESIGNER AND ART DIRECTOR

MASSINE WATCHES A SCENE AND HELPMANN, IN THE BAC
GROUND, WATCHES MASSINE

MICHAEL POWELL, THE DIRECTOR, WITH BRIAN EASDALE
WHO HAS COMPOSED THE MUSIC FOR THE FILM

MOIRA SHEARER PAUSES TO CONSIDER WHILE MICHAEL POWI
DISCUSSES A POINT

A SHEARER IN THE BALLET WHICH GIVES THE FILM ITS TITLE

ROBERT HELPMANN DEMONSTRATES A POSE TO JOAN SHELDON IN THE DEAD CITY SEQUENCE OF "THE RED SHOES" BALLET

. POWELL LOOKS ON WHILE ROBERT HELPMANN, MOIRA SHEARER AND LEONIDE MASSINE REHEARSE ONE OF THE BALLET SCENES

Hein Heckroth, who worked for many years with Ballets Jooss, has done the décor. But it is more than that. It was his ideas, after reading the story, that founded the ballets performed in the film. To create *The Red Shoes* ballet visually Heckroth made four-hundred drawings of every stage of the ballet's progress and made a film of these drawings. This cartoon runs thirteen minutes and has proved a superbly successful device to assist choreographer Robert Helpmann (whose unique combination of knowledge, both of ballet and film technique, made him the essential choice for this side of the work), musician Brian Easdale, the director, and Heckroth himself, to collaborate in producing the ballet sequences.

The music is by Brian Easdale, who wrote the strange, barbaric music for *Black Narcissus*. It was shortly after this that he conceived an ambition—to be music director to a picture which was planned in the initial stage and directed throughout in terms of music. "As, in a ballet, the music is complementary and not subsidiary to the choreography", he argues, "why not to action and dialogue in films?"

He has come close to realising this ambition in *The Red Shoes*, for although the music for *La Boutique Fantasque* is, of course, Rossini's, Easdale has written the music for other ballets in the film in addition to the complementary (not background) music for it.

In *The Red Shoes* ballet there is a dream sequence of almost frightening nightmare reality. The effect is entirely due to the blending of dancing, music, acting and décor. Dancers melt into drawings, bodies become paper. You, as the audience, start to see the ballet from the gallery of Covent Garden. Then you come slowly down and on to the stage. From then on you become, as it were, a member of the ballet seeing it all happen around you. Moira Shearer is the delightful person you follow throughout. Acting and dancing, she hardly leaves the screen and seldom has any actress or ballerina had so arduous a role.

As you reach the stage from the gallery you seem to be projected into her thoughts and you are carried with her out of the "reality" of the ballet into the "unreality" of her imagination while she dances. It is a dream carried out in ballet form, and thus an extension of ballet. It is also the perfect treatment for the fairy story on which it is based. It is a strange and exciting world into which you are carried, and film is the only medium which could produce it.

Let those who are making the film speak for themselves.

Massine: "Film ballet lacks the third dimension of stage ballet, but it gains enormously in its greater dramatic effect. It is good ballet yet a medium all its own. I have the greatest respect for Michael Powell's treatment of the story with the ballets."

Hein Heckroth: "Ballet is like a language. It cannot be arranged carelessly or its meaning is lost. Film ballet must be planned to the last detail before coming to the floor. The conventions of ballet must be respected if the value of ballet is to be preserved. The colour throughout this film has been dictated by the character and the story. The colour changes as the emotion changes."

Michael Powell: "The salient feature of this film is simply Moira Shearer. Before this film could be started it was necessary to find a dancer on the brink of becoming a ballerina; about twenty years of age; beautiful; exquisite figure and legs; strength of character; who could dance all the classical parts; and finally a dancer who could act and *not* an actress who pretended to dance. If we had not found Moira Shearer we could not have made the film."

Jack Cardiff (photographer): "Many new tricks have had to be employed to carry out the highly imaginative ideas in the script. One of these is to vary the speed of shooting in order to interpret the dance to suit the choreography. This device has been used with restraint and only to gain an essential effect. For example, two figures pirouette before the camera and, as they turn, the speed of the camera is changed so that we can get the impression of the figures spinning like a top which dissolves into another different figure. The audience need only be concerned with the effect. How it is done is part of the camera art."

In short, film has been given complete liberty and added something to ballet. It is not going to put Covent Garden and Sadler's Wells out of business, any more than theatres closed when films began. The media are different. Whether or not it throws new light on stage ballet it is certainly a form of entertainment with a character all its own and which may well have a following as particular and as ardent as ballet for the stage.

International Ballet

ENCOURAGED by the success of their visit to the Gaumont State Cinema, Kilburn, International Ballet are continuing their policy of taking ballet to audiences who do not normally see any. During February they are visiting four Granada Cinemas in the following districts:—

February 2nd.—Tooting.
February 9th.—Sutton.
February 16th.—Woolwich.
February 23rd.—Clapham.

MARINA SEMYONOVA AND ALEXANDER LAPAURI IN "SWAN LAKE" FOR A FILM, "SOVIET ART"

PRO AND CONTRA THE FULL-LENGTH BALLET

By ELENA ROSLAVLEVA

I BELONG to the small but particular family of balletomanes who speak the same language all over e world, and as a balletomane I am always happy to eet my English "relations" whenever they come Moscow. Some of them, incidentally, do not come balletomanes but soon begin their ballet education they start visiting the Bolshoi Theatre on Ballet ednesdays. But it is those already touched by the ac Fairy's wand who get most fun out of Moscow let because they compare it with what they have n either during the Diaghilev seasons or at Sadler's ells and Covent Garden.

I have had many talks with English lovers of ballet d have often been asked many bewildered questions: ny are the ballets so long? Why is there a taste the full-length ballet in Russia? Why are there many ballets of the old repertoire? Why is not viet ballet modern in the sophisticated sense of the rd? and so on. In answering these questions I ddenly realised that they would interest all those who are enthusiastic enough to read special articles on Ballet.

A very conscientious Englishman who had spent his three years in Russia in serious study both of the life and the language of its people summed up his impressions of Soviet ballet in the following manner:—

"In talking about Russian ballet when I go home I shall have to be very careful. If I criticise I shall be accused of blasphemy; if I praise without qualification I shall be told that I am several decades out of date. You see, we are accustomed to modern ballet in our sense of the word. What we call Russian ballet is the new ballet created by Diaghilev and his circle. I am most grateful for having been given the chance to see classical ballet preserved as a great tradition, for on any showing the classical ballet is the beginning of wisdom. But if I go to the ballet in Russia I have to spend a whole evening seeing one four-act ballet, with music by Tchaikovsky if I am lucky, or someone else if I am not. And I object to the practice of cutting

your modern ballets to the same measure regardless of Diaghilev's discovery that the best length for a ballet is about three-quarters of an hour; that is, about the length of a symphony. I also object that your ballets take everything too seriously. Each ballet *has* to be a dramatic composition. I would prefer a décor, modern music and modern choreography in *our* sense rather than your *danse d'action* which you have been trying to drive into my poor head''.

''Well, well'', said I. ''Before saying all this it would have been better if you had studied the history of our ballet. We have had all those modernisms you are talking about. And don't you know that in Russian there is a very big difference between the words 'modern' and 'modernistic'? Of course, ballet has to present life in its own romantic way. The second word stands for various inventions of a usually empty mind, such as cubism, surrealism, and all sorts of 'isms'. And I think the circulation of art is so great in Russia that the people have had a good chance to vote for traditions of realism which, as is well known, have always been embedded in Russian art. We did have a period of novelties and innovations in the early 'twenties in ballet as in other fields of art. We had various schools of dance—futuristic, impressionistic, plastic, of the Wigman type, of the Meyerhold type, et cetera. When, in 1926, Stravinsky's *Le Renard* was shown in Leningrad the theatre hissed—a very rare occurrence for the very orderly Russian audience, particularly that of Leningrad. In 1922 Feodor Lopukhov choreographed a 'Dance Symphony' to Beethoven's Fourth. He had the following characters: 'Male active spirit', 'Female active spirit', and even a 'Merry Pitekantropus', whatever that was. The wise Leningrad audience wholeheartedly decided that all this was naive, to say the least, for the great depths of Beethoven's symphony which, anyway, was not written for the dance.

''And'', said I, warming up, ''why do you want us to suit your tastes? The Russian audience likes a long ballet. It expects not merely amusement but some lesson from the evening spent in ballet. More than a century ago Russian ballerinas started creating 'the soul-inspired flight' out of the French court ballet, and such is our art. We lend our own spirit to anything with which we come in contact. In this connection I should like to quote a letter received from an English friend of mine, who wrote: 'I wonder why is it that only in your country the taste for ballets which occupy a whole evening survives? At least, the *taste* survives here and the Tchaikovsky ballets, in our smaller versions, are among the most popular in the Sadler's Wells repertoire, but the creation of new works of such length is unknown' ''.

I answered that one of the reasons is most likely the complete lack of commercialism in Soviet ballet, which is supported by the State. Russian choreographers can work as long as they need on a ballet, whether it is a new one or a revival of a classical piece.

Naturally, Russian readers were condescendingly amused when they read in General Deanne's book on Russia (he was head of the American military mission in wartime) that ''the Russians are a strange people capable of discovering a difference in the production of one and the same ballet, which either drives them into ecstasy or plunges them into despair''.

So I am not at all sure, my dear friend, that Diaghilev's discovery was absolute and indisputable, as you seem to intimate. Diaghilev built his programme to suit his spectators and to be able to support his company and get some profit. At the same time I would be the last to say anything against the practice of short ballets. I think they are very good in their own way, particularly for experimental purposes, and our Nemirovitch-Danchenko ballet company ought to do more of such instead of producing *Francesca da Rimini*, which is a poor man's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Like anyone else who loves and studies Russian art in its entirety, I would also be the last to deny the significance of the revolution produced by Fokine in ballet. But Fokine's traditions *are* living in Russia. Only Fokine often wasted his genius and his new principles on meaningless trifles, probably simply because he never had a chance to work at a big thing. And when he did, he produced probably his greatest masterpiece—the *Polovtsien Dances*.

As for *The World of Art*, one should not forget that it ''discovered'' for Europe not only ballet, but Russian opera and painting. And its greatest ballet period was at the time when the contacts with its mother-country were still strong. It is, however, impossible to compare the *Polovtsien Dances* or *Fire-Bird* with *L'Aprés Midi d'un Faune*. *The World of Art* in its middle and later history was too much an expression of the Russian *art nouveau*, which did a lot of harm in 1910-1912. It was decidedly a reaction to the times, and it is worth while remembering Russian history in this connection.

For my part, I admire Benois and Bakst: but Benois's partiality to the eighteenth-century rococo was not accidental, it was escapism of the purest kind. And though I also adore the gallant marquises and bosquets and trimmed parks, to me the eighteenth century spells Samuel Johnson and Voltaire and Diderot.

But we are deviating from our direct subject, and I am afraid I have started simply telling you off. Let us ask some of our authorities what they think on the two problems raised by you—whether ballet should consist of classical or modern repertoire, and whether it should be full-length or short.

And I invited some leading ballet critics and scholars to meet my balletomane.

"So we are accused of having preserved the traditions f Blasis and Petipa?" said a leading Leningrad critic. I do not see that this is at all bad if the best continues o live in our ballet. We do not intend to modernise allet technique. It is immovable because it is the best. lo other system is as comprehensive, but any good horeographer treats it just as a system. Each country as the right to collect a national library of its best lassical writers. And in the ballet we should maintain n unexpurgated Shakespeare with all the greatness of classical creation. The Shakespeare of ballet is *iselle*, *Swan Lake*. They never fade".

A Moscow critic intervened. "In my opinion, ny work of art is valued by how it stands the test of oth contemporaneity and eternity. The term eternity' is relative in application to art. After all, ne grand piano was invented only some decades ago, nd ballet is a relatively young art in its classical form. robably such works as *Giselle* appear only once in a entury. And we prefer Ulanova's quiet poses to the xtravagance of a grotesque. We expect from the allet, as from any art, a unity of spiritual emotions, chaste harmony, rather than entertainment or scapism or vague interpretation.

"I might add", and there was a twinkle in the ritic's eye, "that while Russia owes a lot to French and Italian masters of the dance (who incidentally were not able to produce anything as great outside Russia), the world owes Russia the re-discovery of ballet and the Russian school. And like a child, whose desires are higher than its possibilities of performance, your ballet plays pranks and frolics and goes into extremities of *Façades*, et cetera. There is no doubt that as it becomes older and thinks its experience over it will give way to a much higher state—a state of wisdom. But wisdom", added the critic, "is always a little dilatory".

"All the same", said my balletomane, rather bewildered by this flow of erudition, "couldn't you produce at least every now and then some short ballets such as we do at home, instead of those long three-act performances which tend to tire me?"

Another critic spoke: "We think that small ballets end, when all is said and done, in a presentation of only fleeting sketches of life. They are experiments not sealed by the experience either of art or of life itself. A steady, self-assured stabilisation of any art begins with the moment when the principles of mastership and the school of the given art are found. We think that the classical dance has summed up the experience of many centuries in the art of dancing. It has concentrated in itself emotions of many people. It has endured the rust of centuries.

"As to the question whether the repertoire should be composed of classical or modern ballets. Of course we should preserve all the best classical ballets so that our choreographers and dancers can drink from the ever fresh classical stream. Otherwise our post-war work is concentrated on the creation of modern ballets —modern in the sense of contemporary. Only ballets to contemporary themes are capable of transforming the choreographer's world of ideas and emotions by enriching it with the new, the contemporary and the vital. Without them any art inevitably degenerates and fades away.

"But ballet should meet life not in the ordinary everyday sense. Ballets which crudely imitated modern life were always a failure. Of all the arts, ballet is the most symbolic. Again one should not confuse 'symbolism' in the *art nouveau* sense with symbols. Ballet is an art of symbols, of metaphors in the highest sense of the word. Dance should not copy life, but present its emotional interpretation. More than any other art dance is suited to present the best and noblest aspects of life, and probably ballet would do better to limit itself to this range of emotions. Thus ballet should remain conditional and allegorical, rousing emotions, extolling the hero and his best qualities. Ballet has more opportunities for fantasy, for certain abstraction and removal from everyday prose, but only when the fantasy and abstraction are a generalisation of that which is real and living. Thus

LINA ULANOVA AND MIKHAIL GABOVITCH IN "ROMEO D JULIET", A MODERN SOVIET FULL-LENGTH BALLET

it is likely that modern ballet will not be expected to have recourse to unsightly modern clothes or realistic replicas of events. No recipe can be given, however, and choreographers will have to find new principles in the course of the work which may require much experimentation.

"The failures with contemporary ballets which have occurred hitherto were due not to the conflict between the poesy of dance and the truth of life, but to the fact that there was an attempt to 'dance everything'—from machines to sickness, and the subject was illustrated rather than disclosed. Ballet should reveal the inner emotional meaning. Also the method of choreography was wrong. Either traditional *pas de deux* were squeezed into a thoroughly contemporary theme or, since the choreographer did not know what to do, he made his characters walk about and gesticulate instead of dance. Latest works of Soviet choreographers show that they are well on the way to founding a new school from which they will be able to draw inspiration. We shall see what will be achieved by the new ballets shortly to be produced, such as *Life*, *Daughter of the People*, *Militza*, *Happy Coast*, *Youth*, and so on".

Our talk was lasting late into the night. It was time to go. On parting, one of the Moscow critics said: "As to the young English national ballet, whose birth we are watching with great interest, we cannot help expressing surprise that instead of drinking from the well of classical ballet and its own folk art your choreographers sometimes make sideways leaps. We realise, of course, that your ballet has its own way to go in harmony with your own national spirit, and we wish it the best of success".

My balletomane friend, thoroughly satisfied with the opportunity for discussion he had received, though he found some of the opinions hard to agree with, went off to his twelfth performance of the four-act *Swan Lake*.

BAR TALK

Recorded by JANET SINCLAIR

THE Vintage Balletomane had been listening to the chatter in the bar for a long time before his patience finally gave out. Then he leaned forward and tapped the young woman on the shoulder.

"Excuse me!" he said, "but Markova created that part, you know".

Blank amazement on all their faces. The brunette said faintly, holding up her book, "But it says in here . . ."

The Vintage Balletomane turned up the back of the book and glanced at the title. "Oh, *him*!" he said moodily.

The blonde tossed her curls out of her eyes, pouting slightly.

"But there are dozens and dozens of photographs of Margot in that part, and I've never seen one of Markova". She accentuated the name on the wrong syllable and the Vintage Balletomane's lips moved silently. Then—

"Have you ever seen Markova on the stage?" he asked.

Brunette, blonde and redhead shook their heads simultaneously.

"Well, then, if you saw a photograph of her you might not be interested, and therefore pay no attention to it?"

Silence.

"But I still don't think she ever did it", said the brunette.

"I saw her", said the Vintage Balletomane.

"Good Lord! However old are you? You must be frightfully old?"

"That's beside the point", said the Vintage Balletomane testily. "Anyway, I was old enough to see Markova with the Wells and with her own company *and* with Massine".

"Massine!" said the blonde with a rapt look. "I think he's wonderful. He was the first Petrouchka, wasn't he?"

The Vintage Balletomane winced.

"But she never danced with Massine!" said the brunette. "I'm sure of that anyway! She always danced with Anton Dolin".

"My child", said the Vintage Balletomane, "you are very young. And sadly misinformed. She danced in the Massine Company in 1938, both at the Lane and at the Garden".

"I never knew *that*", said the redhead, "and whatever was Dolin doing?"

"Oh, not so badly", said the Vintage Balletomane with a reminiscent smile. "He was dancing *Présages* and *Swan Lake* and *Prodigal Son* with Baronova".

A whirlwind swept past them in the bar crying loudly to its companions:

"Well, I saw *Paul*, and she said that Bobby was
ıply raving *mad* about it, and I said, '*Well*, darling'—"
The Vintage Balletomane's three companions turned
l cast an icy stare at the whirlwind's back.
"Silly girl!" said the brunette.
"Showing off!" said the redhead.
"Why, she's only been going to ballet for about
e minutes!" said the blonde.
"In fact", said the Vintage Balletomane enquiringly,
he doesn't know what she's talking about?"
"That's right".
A silence fell on the party.
"What do you think of *Tricorne*?" said the Vintage
lletomane.
"Wonderful!" said the brunette.
"Sadler's Wells can do *anything*!" said the blonde.
"Of course, Margot's *wonderful*!" said the redhead.
"I bet there isn't a dancer to touch her in the whole
ɔrld!" said the blonde radiantly.
"Wait till you see Danilova", said the Vintage
lletomane, with a touch of smugness in his voice.
"Oh", said the brunette, "she's a bit plain in
otographs".
The Vintage Balletomane drew a deep breath.
Sometimes photographs do not do her justice, but",
said carefully, "she is one of the loveliest creatures
ever saw".
"I'm *sure* I shan't like her as much as Margot", said
e redhead happily. "Nobody dances like Margot,
d anyway I do like classical dancers better than any
her sort".
"Did no one ever tell you", said the Vintage
lletomane patiently, "that Danilova's Swan Queen
quite perfect? What about her Swanhilda, her
ue Bird, her Aurora, her Sylphide?"

"Good Lord-love-a-duck, I never thought she did *that* sort of thing. I thought the Can-Can Dancer and so on was her line".

"Before such abysmal ignorance the gods themselves are silent!" said the Vintage Balletomane—but he said it to himself. Aloud, he said, "Where were you dragged up, my child?"

"We go to the ballet six nights a week, and we have the opportunity of seeing some of the greatest dancers who have ever lived, I don't care *what* you say!" said the blonde belligerently. "Just because you happen to be older than us you think we don't know anything!"

The Vintage Balletomane's eye wandered out over the bar. "Well", he said, "let's see how much you do know. And I'll buy whoever gives me the right answer a picture postcard of Robert Helpmann. You see that little man over there?"

Three pairs of eyes followed his glance.

"That little man talking to Beaumont. By the pillar. Curly fair hair, pointed ears and a face like an elf, with the bluest eyes and the sweetest smile in the world".

"Yes, I see".

"Which one? With the cigarette? Oh, yes, I see".

"Who is he?" asked the Vintage Balletomane.

Silence.

"All right. I'll give you a clue. He was one of the greatest dancers that ever lived, and certainly the greatest technician, and he danced for Diaghilev".

"But", said the redhead, "I thought he was dead, or something?"

"Who?" said the Vintage Balletomane.

"Nijinsky".

"God give me strength!"

London Visit of Aurel Milloss

FOLLOWING the very successful *première* of his new ballet, *Don Quichotte* (see next page), for Les llets des Champs-Elysées, Aurel Milloss spent a few ys' holiday in London. This was in the nature of a cky accident since he should really have returned to ɔme. However, the French general strike made it sier for him to come to London than to go to Italy he was able to take a look at our ballet before going ck to face four strenuous months mounting eleven llets at the Opera House, Rome, before departing the beginning of April for the Colon Theatre, ienos Aires. *Ballet Today*, No. 3, contained an ticle on ballet in Italy largely dealing with Milloss's ɔrk which is unfortunately not yet known in this untry, and his *Don Quichotte* has greatly impressed e Paris critics.

In his opinion (and as he explains it, it certainly sounds convincing) London is, and always has been since the days of Mme. Sallé, the world centre of Ballet, since every famous dancer and every company has had to come to London before making their reputations elsewhere. Certainly it is true that in London one feels there is a stability of audience which does not exist anywhere else outside Russia.

Milloss was deeply impressed with both *Checkmate* and *Symphonic Variations*. He thinks the latter is undoubtedly one of the great masterpieces of modern ballet, a significant tribute from a choreographer who admits that it is not in line with the medium through which he himself chooses to work. He also said that Margot Fonteyn is the greatest ballerina he has ever seen, her range from *Symphonic Variations* to *Mam'zelle Angot* being altogether phenomenal.

P.W.M.

BALLET IN PARIS, DECEMBER, 1947

By FERDINAND REYNA

IS the face of the theatre undergoing a change? We might be tempted to believe it from preliminary signs it is interesting to notice.

First of all, ballet definitely seems to have taken, in public taste, the place occupied by the Opéra Lyrique during the 19th century. In Paris the Opéra-Comique nowadays has its evening of ballet in the same way as the Opéra. The visit of the de Basil Company coincided with those of Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées and Les Ballets de Monte Carlo who, owing to their success, had to prolong their stay. This is without counting the dance recitals in the various Paris halls, which are always full. And the dance is gradually invading stages where but lately it was excluded; thus, such famous men of the theatre as J.-L. Barrault require that both actors and writers should study the classical dance, while the mime, Décroux, has just given an important and very successful series of performances. We shall shortly notice what repercussions these theories have on the evolution of ballet.

Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées, directed by Roland Petit and Boris Kochno, had announced three creations for this Paris season; only two were actually given. The first, *Les Treize Danses*, with choreography by Petit, might equally well have been called *Sensation de Cirque*. The music was taken from Grétry, revolutionary composer of 1789. Certainly the playfulness of Mlles. Irène Skorik as the ingénue, Leslie Caron as a lady clown, Nelly Guillerm as an Auguste, Nathalie Philippart as a circus rider and Danièle Darmance as an intriguing young widow, is delightful and amusing, but the libretto which has been imposed on the music is banal in the extreme. The success of *Treize Danses* depends almost entirely on the magnificent costumes by the Parisian *couturier* Christian Dior. But costumes, however beautiful, do not make a ballet. Roland Petit is a choreographer who has done some charming things—perhaps too charming.

Don Quichotte, "A Choreographic Portrait" by Aurel Milloss with music by Goffredo Petrassi is of a very

ROSELLA HIGHTOWER AND ANDRÉ EGLEVSKY IN THE LAST MOVEMENT OF THE "BRAHMS VARIATIONS"

ROLAND PETIT AND NINA VYROUBOVA IN "LES TREIZE DAN

Action photographs by Duncan Melvin

ifferent import. The aesthetic of Milloss can be pressed in a few words: To give free rein to the llest creative expression, based on the strict classical hool. Milloss makes use of every experiment, cluding those of Laban, the German expressionist, id his *Don Quichotte* is a true synthesis of all these inciples. It must be borne in mind that this portrait not actually that of the hero of Cervantes but that of man who wishes to become the living symbol of Don uixote. In Milloss's conception Dulcinea is not a dull easant girl but rather an eager, sarcastic, even wicked oman. Nathalie Philippart gives complete life to this le. Jean Babilée, who is not only a dancer of the st rank but a mime, a most expressive actor, vividly its off the character created by Milloss. Goffredo etrassi's music is strong, varied and rich but adhering the modern sobriety of line. The *Don Quichotte* of lilloss-Petrassi is a ballet, but also it is a dance-drama which the mime does not aim only at expressing utward action through gesture but which, choreographically translated, reveals the inner drama of the erson concerned.

François Mauriac seems to have best summed up ritical opinion in speaking of *Don Quichotte* as a true horeographic mystery, forerunner of the dance agedy of the future.

The public immediately acclaimed with enthusiasm his intensely poignant work. The settings and costumes by the Irish painter, T. Keogh, are strange and icturesque. Aurel Milloss, whose aesthetic ideal is the horeodrama, seems to us to be the advance-guard of a novement which is today taking form and which omorrow perhaps may revolutionise our choreographic onceptions.

The long artistic experience, taste and firm direction f the famous Bronislava Nijinska enabled the Monte Carlo Company to live up to its reputation when it resented at the Alhambra, Paris, two Nijinska ballets f undoubted importance.

In the first part of the *Brahms Variations* (on the Handel-Paganini themes) under the golden light of an Olympus imagined by the artist Vertés, the divinities urround Apollo, creating out of joy, while in the econd part we see the artist on earth, brought forth in orrow and striving to attain divine perfection by ensibility and ceaseless toil. Rosella Hightower, who s undoubtedly a very great dancer, aroused the nthusiasm of the public, as did Marjorie Tallchief and André Eglevsky.

The other new ballet, *Pictures from an Exhibition*, to he music of Moussorgsky, is a very austere work onceived by Madame Nijinska during the days of 1944 nd still filled with the gravity of that time. One must render homage to Nijinska who, with a tupendous simplicity of means, has succeeded in reating a *ballet* where every resource of the human

Photograph by Duncan Melvin
ROSELLA HIGHTOWER IN "SEBASTIAN", A BALLET BY EDWARD CATON FOR THE MONTE CARLO BALLET

NATHALIE PHILIPPART AND JEAN BABILEE IN "DON QUICHOTTE"

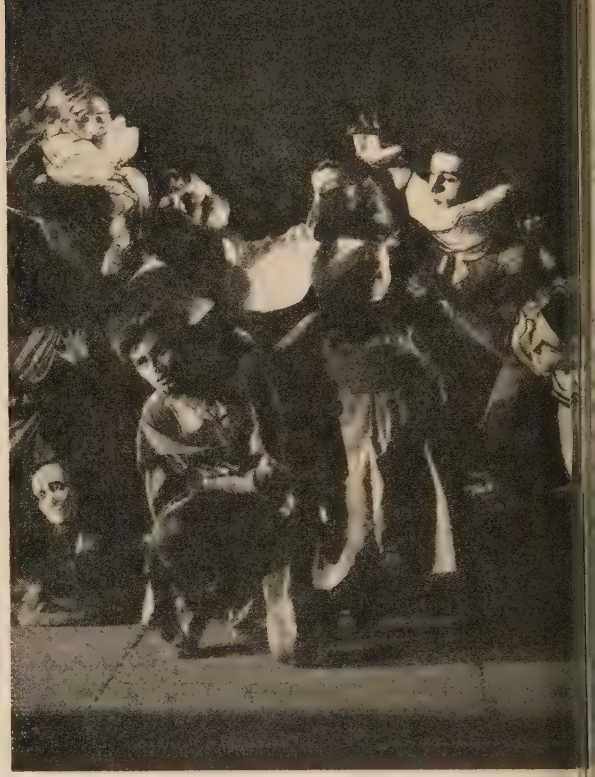
body is brought into play without recourse to extravagance and still less to odious sentimentality. Colour and form interplay in the human groups which form the choreographic picture. Madame Nijinska knows the secret of the use of space. In brief, these two fine ballets testify once more to the mastery of their great creator.

Amongst the other works presented in Paris by this company we must not forget *Constantia*, a purely abstract classical ballet by the American, William Dollar, based on Chopin's second piano concerto. This work, impregnated throughout with a nostalgic and tempered romantic idealism, is agreeable to watch, but there is nothing new about it. For classical variations, however exquisite, mean nothing today if they alone constitute a ballet. They belong definitely to the past.

Editorial Comment (continued from page 3).

may be. This is all the more peculiar because English Ballet has not, in fact, yet produced a great male classical dancer. The girls suffer in converse by finding themselves relegated in perpetuity to whatever mazurka and czardas may turn up from time to time, and a succession of those character parts in which our ballet abounds and which barely permit of any dancing at all. In former days the particular genius of a Woizikovsky or a Sokolova was fully understood and appreciated, and they were not the less esteemed because classical tights and tutus were not for them.

In Paris the dance recital has long been the most *chic* way of seeing ballet and all the leading French dancers habitually give concert performances. In America the difficulty of travelling large companies across a vast continent has led to the formation of small "groups" of half a dozen or so top rank dancers, this idea originating with Massine's Highlights two or three years back. There always seems to be a fresh group starting out though they rarely seem to survive more than a season. Except in rare instances—Argentina being the most famous—we have usually been suspicious of recital artists, and it is certainly true that in the past they have usually been more distinguished for their private means and personal ambition than for any marked talent. But the recently formed Les Etoiles de la Danse is a new departure for this country, based on the small troupe idea already usual both in America and Paris. It consists of six established stars, five of whom are already well known in this country. Renée Jeanmaire and Vladimir Skouratoff came to England with Lifar in 1946, and again in 1947 with Colonel de Basil's Ballet Russe; Colette Marchand and Serge



Action photograph by Duncan Melvin

ANOTHER SCENE FROM "DON QUICHOTTE"

Perrault were with our Metropolitan Ballet, and the Spanish dancing of Ana Nevada was one of the features of the first season here of Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées. Nicolas Moyseenko was principal mime with the Monte Carlo. Their repertoire is especially devised for a small group without a *corps de ballet*, and contains a number of ballets which are actually *pas de deux*. Les Etoiles de la Danse started at Bournemouth, and are now at the Adelphi Theatre for a series of four matinées a week, before a provincial tour. It will be interesting to see whether English audiences take to this new idea. For my part I found it a most accomplished though cold-blooded entertainment. It is impossible to create the mood of *Swan Lake* against dark curtains with a piano half-way out of the wings. Lifar's choreography in *Aubade* came off perhaps best, as its extraordinary plastic quality shows up well against such a background, and Jeanmaire and Skouratoff dance with a full realisation of its beauty. Lifar's inspiration is all too erratic, but has moments of high excitement. Ana Nevada is a superb dancer in the Spanish idiom. She should not try to combine this with stereotyped ballet steps in which many others can excel her, for in her own *métier* she is almost unique.

P.W.M.

HOW TO JUDGE A DANCER

By EDWIN DENBY

WHEN you watch a dancer you are observing a young woman or a young man in fancy dress, d you like it if they look attractive, if they are well ilt and have what seems to be an open face. You tice the youthful spring in starting, the grace of rriage, the strength in stopping. You like it if they ow what to do and where to go, if they can throw a surprising trick or two, if they seem to be enjoying eir part and are pleasantly sociable as performers. l this is proper juvenile charm, and it often gives a ry sharp pleasure in watching dancers.

But you are ready, too, for other qualities beside arm. The audience soon notices if the dancer has usual control over her movements, if what she is ing is unusually clear to the eye, if there are differ- ces of emphasis and differences of urgency in her otion. Within single slow movements or within a quence you enjoy seeing the continuity of an impulse d the culmination of a phrase. Now you are not only atching a charming dancer, she is also showing you dance.

When she shows you a dance, she is showing how e steps are related, that they are coherent and make me sense. You can see that they make some sense relation to the music or in relation to the story; d now and then the dancer shows you they make nse also as dance phrases purely and simply. You ay notice that a dance phrase holds together by its ythm in time (a rhythm related to that of music), a sequence of long and short motions set off by a w accents. Again in other passages you may be most terested by the arrangements in space, motions that ake up a rhythm of large and small, up and down, ght and left, backward and forward. You watch nce figures that combine several directions, done by ngle dancers or by groups, in place or while covering stance. Such dance phrases are plastically interesting. ut at still other moments you notice especially the anges in the dancer's energy, the dynamics of a quence, which contrasts motion as taut or easy, tive or passive, pressing or delaying, beginning or nding. Dynamics, space and time—the dancer may ll one or the other to your attention, but actually e keeps these three strands of interest going all the me, for they are all simultaneously present in even e simplest dancing. But a dancer who can make the rious factors clear at the proper passage so as to keep you interested in the progress of the dance is especially attractive because she is dancing intelligently. She makes even a complicated choreography distinct to see.

Intelligent dancing—which might as well be called correct dancing—has a certain dryness that appeals more to an experienced dance lover than to an inexperienced one. In any case, every one in the audience becomes more attentive when they recognise a personal impetus in an intelligent dancer's movement, when she has a way of looking not merely like a good dancer, but also different from others and like her own self. Her motions look spontaneous, as if they suited her particular body, her personal impulses, as if they were being invented that very moment. This is originality in dancing—and quite different from originality in choreography. The original dancer vivifies the dance—plain or complicated, novel or otherwise—that the choreographer has set. She shows a gift like that of an actor who speaks his lines as if they were being uttered for the first time that very moment, though they have been in print a hundred years or though he has spoken them a hundred nights running.

Such vitality in dancing is not the same thing as that punch in projection sometimes called a "dynamic stage personality". A lively dancer does not push herself on the audience, except, of course, during curtain calls. Projection in serious dancing is a mild and steady force; the dancer who goes out to the audience with a bang cuts herself off from the rest of the stage action. Galvanic projection is a trick appropriate to revue, where there is no drama to interrupt. But in serious dancing the audience must be kept constantly aware of the complete action within the stage area, because the changes—and, therefore, the drama—of dancing are appreciated clearly in relation to that fixed three-dimensional frame. So the best dancers are careful to remain within what one may call the dance illusion, as an actor remains within the illusion of a dramatic action—when you cannot help imagining he is a young man speaking privately to a girl in a garden, though you see perfectly well he is middle aged, that he is talking blank verse for you to hear and standing on a wooden floor.

And just as you become really absorbed at a play when Romeo is not only distinct and spontaneous, but also makes you recognise the emotion of love, which has nothing to do with the actor personally or with

acting in itself or with words in themselves, so the dancer becomes absorbing to watch when she makes you aware of emotions that are not make-believe at all. Some of my friends doubt that it is possible to give so much expressive power to dancing; though they grant it is possible to performers of music or of plays. To recognise poetic suggestion through dancing, one has to be susceptible to poetic values and susceptible to dance values as well. But I find that a number of people are, and that several dancers, for example Miss Danilova and Miss Markova, are quite often able to give them the sense of an amplitude in meaning which is the token of emotion in art. I myself go to dancing looking for this pleasure, which is the pleasure of the grand style, and find a moment or two of satisfaction in the work of a dozen dancers or more. In these remarkable flights the choreographer may be admired even more than the dancer, but here I am describing the merits of dancing only.

(Reproduced by permission of the Author and the "New York Herald Tribune".)

BALLET IN SEARCH OF A THEME

By FRANK JACKSON

IT is quite obvious from recent seasons in London that choreographers are hard put to it nowadays to discover suitable themes for new works. Everyone realises that a ballet repertoire cannot exist solely on revivals of the classics, but it is also clear that there is nothing to be learnt nowadays from these ballets as far as thematic material is concerned. The ballets themselves have become little more than test pieces, while there has been a great change in the attitude of the ballet-goer since the days of the original productions of *Swan Lake*, *Giselle* and *Sleeping Beauty*, for example. We require far more, thematically, of our new works than the balletomanes of the Imperial Russian Ballet.

Yet it is difficult to define exactly what we do require. An interest in the contemporary scene? Classical ballet (in the technical sense) has never been able to tackle contemporary themes objectively with much success. Where *Miracle in the Gorbals* succeeds, as an example, is not so much in its documentary character as in the translation into terms of dance of the Helpmann paranoia which is equally, but more effectively, in evidence in *Hamlet*—a non-contemporary theme, and frankly and completely subjective in character.

But choreographers have been no more successful with the contemporary theme when they have used non-classical techniques to portray it. Of course, the one exception is Kurt Jooss' *Big City*, but it is the exception which proves the rule; for not even Jooss himself has been able to produce a successor to it. Ernest Berk's attempt, in *Trilustrum*, to deal with a contemporary theme in the dance idiom of Mittel Europa was not successful, chiefly because, after all, this idiom is fundamentally no more fitted *per se* than classical ballet for the transcription of everyday actions into dance.*

Perhaps, then, we should not expect ballet to deal with everyday themes. Perhaps objective description falls outside its scope. Perhaps ballet is not capable of an objective translation of contemporary fact, but only of a subjective one, in which no date can be assigned to the problem presented, as, for example, in *Hamlet* and *Mardi Gras*. The danger here, of course, is that the problems, the emotions and thoughts expressed, will be so subjective as to be fully intelligible to no-one except the choreographer. Tudor's *Undertow* was so well on the way to this unintelligibility that it required extensive programme notes to help explain his esoteric symbolism.

Le Jeune Homme et la Mort deserves some consideration at this point as a ballet in modern dress which was, at least on first impact, highly successful. But further viewings revealed the non-contemporary nature of its theme and, in any case, it is technically so peculiar a mixture that it is not likely to lead to anything else, and is little more than a show-piece for the special talents of Jean Babilée and Nathalie Philippart.

* Another danger in attempting to translate objective actions into dancing was recently displayed in Andrée Howard's *Sailor's Return*, which often over-emphasised the story at the expense of dancing and which became, as a result, little more than mime.

ph by Edward Mandinian

ARLETTY AND ROLAND PETIT BACK-STAGE AT COVENT GARDEN, WITH MARGOT FONTEYN, NINETTE DE VALOIS, FREDERICK ASHTON, MOIRA SHEARER AND MICHAEL SOMES

Attempts have been made to solve the problem of eme by a return* to the "abstract" translation into ncing of ideas and emotions suggested by the music. hton's *Symphonic Variations* is a beautiful example of is trend. But while it is in itself a lovely ballet, d all the more welcome as a breath of fresh air in e Helpmann hothouse, it seems to me that it is not ely to lead anywhere as an example for others.

The problem is, however, by no means insoluble, d a way out of the labyrinth is suggested by *Three rnered Hat*, *Fancy Free* and the dance sequences in *lahoma*! Of these three, only *Fancy Free* is contemrary in a historical sense, but all of them are unniably our contemporaries spiritually. They have s in common, too, that while they are based on the ssical technique, and thus acquire the solidity of tradition, at the same time they infuse into this technique the virility of folk dancing—the spirit of folk dancing, if not the letter. After all, jitterbug and rumba are as much folk dancing as zapateado. But this spirit needs to be translated through the intelligence of the choreographer and the discipline of classical technique before it acquires the permanence of art. And the characters in these works, while not perhaps fully differentiated individuals, are still men and women and not neuters. Massine, de Mille and Robbins have looked outwards instead of inwards. They have broken through the enchanted circle inside which dancers live falsely immune from the outside world.

This break-through has been deplored. But if the breach is healed and ballet retires once again into its dream world, then it will surely die of inanition, though the death may be a very beautiful one.

* "Return" in the sense that the parents of *Symphonic riations* are *Choreartium* and *Présages* which, in spite of ir programmatic flapdoodle, are attempts on a grandiose le to translate music straight into dancing, and, indeed, ich fails at those points where a theme is imposed on the sic.

The John Sharman action photograph on the cover shows Jean Bedells as Love and Franklin White as Death in "Checkmate", at Covent Garden.

A Cheer for Mam'zelle Angot (*continued from page 6*)

scenes and five out of the third—the story is silly, muddled, and what there is of it has run out by the end of the second scene, the third scene is not choreographically inventive until it pulls itself together for the most exhilarating finale since *Le Beau Danube* was in its heyday, and worst of all, there are throughout traces of those vulgarities which flaw so many of Massine's light ballets (and occasionally his serious works). This vulgarity gets the upper hand of the choreographer in the big *pas de deux* in the second scene. This is quite out of period and the unfortunate girl is forced into a series of ungainly positions accentuated by a dress which is unsuitable for such antics. The fault lies entirely with the choreographer and not with the dancers whose skill and discretion deserve the highest praise and reduce the ugliness to an absolute minimum.

To sum up, this is not a masterpiece like *Le Tricorne*, nor is it so good a ballet in its own kind as *La Boutique Fantasque*, though ballet goers who never saw this before the war may find that statement difficult to believe; therefore it does not increase the reputation of Massine though it certainly does not diminish it. But as I have said, it is a supremely important ballet for Sadler's Wells and it would be grossly unfair not to bestow praise for what it means to them. For, before anything else, this is a ballet in which everyone assumes a character and everyone dances. Hitherto our character ballets have rarely provided roles which required any particular dancing skill. There are no Millers or Miller's Wives, no Potmen, Gay Ladies, Tramps, Snobs, Street Dancers—one could go on indefinitely. Our character parts have usually depended on make-up, a feeling for period, and mime which tends to be acting with the words omitted. Now along comes Massine, and behold! the stage is thronged with varied characters all dancing, and what is more, all apparently enjoying themselves. What Massine has done is to put the acting where it belongs in ballet—in the dancing. It sounds simple enough, but our own choreographers rarely seem to have thought of it.

The response of the dancers to this treatment is electrifying. Joy radiates from the stage and crackles round every circle to the gallery. Perhaps Margot Fonteyn will never consider Mam'zelle Angot one of her major roles, but this gay vixen sets off her other characterisations and gives her an opportunity to display a versatility that has not been in evidence since the move to Covent Garden. Julia Farron also dances with great success in this part which comes more naturally within the compass of her own personality. Moira Shearer's arms and hands still need attention but her feet are as beautiful as ever, months of filming seem to have widened her powers of projection and her graceful tact in that dubious *pas de deux* merits a further mention. In the showiest part he has ever had, Michael Somes dances with a flashing kingfisher quality at one with his elegant blue costume and performs prodigies of partnering throughout. As for young Alexander Grant, here at last we may have found a future great character dancer who may worthily be mentioned alongside the Woizikovsky's and Shabelevsky's of Russian days. He brings to the little barber lover of Mam'zelle Angot a comical, wry charm which has in it that touch of pathos which is the mark of your true clown. As he gathers himself up into a little, boneless monument of despair before falling disconsolately into the arms of his friends, he is supremely funny, but he is also pitiful. He has that kind of *ballon* which has hardly been seen since Idzikowski—the impression is always that he is rising from the ground like a particularly resilient rubber ball. These are the four principals, but everyone is good, and it is eminently worth while to include such dancers as Turner and Hamilton in small parts, for they do much to help along the third scene. As it is always interesting to note progress in a young dancer, I record Gilbert Vernon's neatness and style in the tiny part of the Minstrel.

Lecocq's music is trivial but consistently tuneful and so cunningly orchestrated by Gordon Jacob that he almost persuades us that we are listening to Very Best Offenbach.

One of the chief delights of this entrancing ballet is the Derain décor, and though it is not Derain's own finest work for the theatre, it is so much better than anything our own young designers seem capable of producing, that it is an object lesson in ballet design. I especially liked the idea conveyed in the first act-drop that Mam'zelle Angot was taken off to prison round the back way, the impression being that we are looking at the backs of the houses which we have viewed from the front in the first scene. A small quibble might be that the second act-drop is not only unnecessary, since the first could be shown again, but is conventionally an easel landscape enlarged. Derain's colour values remain impeccable.

Thus a Russian choreographer and a French designer working with a company of English dancers have produced a ballet which should appeal everywhere. If it helps the process of breaking down the barriers which are nowadays being erected to divide ballet into compartments marked "English", "French", "American", and so on, it will be serving a purpose of far greater ultimate good than that of providing a welcome addition to Sadler's Wells' repertoire. What I should now like to see is Massine creating an entirely original and serious work for Sadler's Wells. They have served him well and deserve the honour.

P.W.M.

Balletomane's Bookshelf

AINTINGS OF THE BALLET. By Theyre Lee-Elliott. ollins, 18s. net.)

Of all subjects for the artist, ballet is the most fficult, and though it continues to fascinate it also, most cases, continues to elude; for the essence of llet is in its movement, and the artist must somehow nvey the impression of movement through what is sentially a static medium. This has been done with nsiderable success by a number of artists who ntent themselves with line drawings, usually of ngle dancers, but paint and canvas seem to erect a rrier before which painters as eminent as Orpen ve been brought up short. Theyre Lee-Elliott has orked out a technique of his own and in a surprising mber of instances it comes off admirably. The sults now appear in a book for which Arnold Haskell s written a most interesting foreword. Lee-Elliott es succeed in conveying the atmosphere of a ballet d the particular style of movement which belongs to and in addition has a remarkable gift of portraying me set of head or turn of body individual to a dancer thout attempting to define features. Indeed, where has deliberately set out to present a facial likeness, not only fails, but the whole sketch loses its strength. his can be seen in the two sketches of Massine in *Tricorne*, one of which—without any face—is yond all doubt Massine, while the other might be yone. He similarly fails with his Petrouchka, hereas his Helpmann in *Hamlet*, Fonteyn in *Nocturne*, d Mary Honer in *Orpheus and Eurydice*, could not ssibly be any but those dancers. I found this book welcome relief from the continued bombardment of otographs, and it is beautifully reproduced by a new ocess which loses as little as possible of the quality the originals.

OIRA SHEARER. BALLET ALBUM No. 1. (The byn Press, 3s. 6d. net.)

This is evidently the first of a series and consists of kteen page photographs of Moira Shearer in a number her roles. Doubtless this dancer's innumerable mirers will fall upon it with joy, but I can imagine it using some embarrassment to Miss Shearer herself, hose eminently modest and sensible summing up of r own career is quoted in the foreword: "So far have not done enough. A dancer needs more than a ar or two to prove her worth." She is certainly a more interesting and versatile artist than these otographs would indicate. The trouble with all this pe of publication is that by the time it appears it is ready out of date, since every dancer worthy of such 'tribute" is constantly adding to her roles.

Approach
to the
Ballet

By
A. H. Franks
Assistant Editor, *Dancing Times*, and contributor to numerous journals.

Serious students of the ballet recognise the author of this book as one of its most knowledgable as well as ardent enthusiasts. His lectures on the subject at Goldsmith's College and at the City Literary Institute have attracted a wide following, and he is much in demand as a lecturer to Ballet Clubs throughout the country. His book makes a new and important contribution to the understanding and appreciation of ballet, not only by its present followers, but by the wider public who have yet to be won.

Abt. 21/- *net*

Pitman

Parker Street, Kingsway, London W.C.2

NEW DEVELOPMENTS. BALLET. By Fernau Hall. MUSIC by Thomas Russell. (John Lane, The Bodley Head. 2s. 6d. net.)

These books belong to a series but are the two of particular interest to the ballet public—the former especially, of course. *Ballet* by Fernau Hall does not pretend to do more than give a general survey of conditions prevailing before, during and after the war, but within the limits of a small book he succeeds in sketching in a fairly comprehensive picture, though he lays an unnecessary stress on some unimportant manifestations which are not likely to have any bearing one way or the other on the future of ballet. His section on our ballet in wartime brings with it a shock of surprise on realising how comparatively recent those days were and how well-nigh impossible the conditions under which ballet continued not only to exist but to flourish. I hope Mr. Hall will take it as a compliment if I warn the balletomaniac portion of the audience, whose idea of a good book is a lot of pictures and eulogies of their particular favourites, that *Ballet* is not addressed to them.

Music I listen to for my recreation and not as a professional occupation, so I was able to read Mr. Russell's book also for recreation without being under the necessity of passing any judgment on it. It sounds a convincing statement of facts which I have no intention of challenging. His *cri de cœur* on the subject of music criticism in this country might be echoed word for word as applying to ballet. P.W.M.

OUR TIME

A SUCCESSFUL NEW SERIES

★

From your newsagent or by post

Subscription rates:

TWELVE ISSUES **13s.** post free
SIX ISSUES **6s. 6d.** post free

THE new series of this monthly magazine is causing great interest. In the last six years OUR TIME has established itself as the leading progressive periodical of art criticism, and we have now extended our function and sharpened our critical approach with good effect. Now more than ever it is vital to stimulate appreciation of the best in literature, theatre, painting, music, ballet and film, and to develop understanding of current problems of culture and environment, education, the artist and the State, and the place of the Arts in new communities.

TWENTY-EIGHT PAGES ONE SHILLING

I enclose £ being months subscription for copies monthly.

Name:

Address:

POST THIS TO OUR TIME 28/29 SOUTHAMPTON ST., W.C.2 DH2

To be fully informed about all phases of Dance . . . . READ the

NEW YORK DANCE NEWS

CORRESPONDENTS ALL OVER THE WORLD

CRITIQUES, ARTICLES, PICTURES

• •

BY SUBSCRIPTION 10/- per annum
POST FREE

• •

Subscriptions accepted by:

BALLET TODAY
244 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON W.C.1

RAMBERT SCHOOL

PROFESSIONAL
JUNIOR
CHILDREN'S
CHARACTER
AND SYLLABUS
CLASSES

ALL PARTICULARS FROM THE SECRETARY
MERCURY THEATRE . LADBROKE ROAD
Phone: PAR 7233 **LONDON W.11**

Printed by Bemrose & Sons Ltd., Derby, and Published by Newman Wolsey Ltd., 244 High Holborn, London W.C.1. Telephone: Chancery 8471